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LATIN CLUB LUNCHEON

Twentieth Meeting of the Latin Club—Feb 9, 1907

Professor Charles G Fenwick, one of the professors of Latin in the High School Department of the College of Saint Francis Xavier, will address the club on the subject: "The Teaching of Latin in Saint Francis Xavier", at the Hotel Marlborough, Thirty-sixth Street and Broadway, New York City. Luncheon will be served promptly at 12 M. Seats will be reserved for those holding tickets (see announcement regarding tickets on p 3), others should be sure to notify THE LATIN LEAFLET, 179 Marcy Ave, Brooklyn, by postal card, if intending to be present. ATTEND TO THIS MATTER NOW.

Superintendent Maxwell, who was to have addressed The Latin Club on this occasion, has felt forced to give up public speaking for this year owing to the condition of his health, and he has therefore asked for a release from his promise, much to his regret.

The Leaflet feels in honor bound to offer to refund 67c to any who may have been induced to buy their tickets in the belief that they were to hear Dr Maxwell.

Ticket-holders who have not yet paid their membership-fee are kindly requested to send same to the treasurer.

THE CLASSICAL CONFERENCE OF 1906 IN PHILADELPHIA

In Three Parts—Part I

The Fourth Classical Conference in connection with the Meeting of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Middle States and Maryland was held in Philadelphia, November 30th, 1906. The meeting was well attended, there being present about a hundred persons. The subject of the conference was: College Entrance Requirements, the Real Versus the Ideal.

In opening the Conference, the Chairman, Mr A L Hodges, remarked that of the three speakers, the

first would speak of the real, the second of the ideal, and the third of their reconciliation.

The first speaker, Mr J G Crosswell, spoke, in effect, as follows:

I thank Mr Hodges for permitting me to open this discussion, which is of great interest to me. There are, as I understand, no metaphysics involved. The real Latin, which I discuss, signifies only the Latin which we actually obtain from the "whining school boy going reluctantly to school"; "Ideal Latin" means the Latin which scholars would like to get; and Professor McCrea is to finish on the "College Board Examinations", where the questions, I suppose, are all ideal, and the answers real.

I have a chronological fitness for my task, as Mr Hodges has said. I have seen three generations of men, including my own, grappling with the task of learning Latin, and although ideals have varied, the actual product remains much the same in all generations.

In my own school life we studied Latin in the old way. We learned many inflections and many rules. We understood edification to be the aim of our work, moral, as well as intellectual. Our tool was the memory; we used our wits as little as possible. The moral cast of the whole business affected me as a boy with the belief that exceptions to Latin rules were equivalent to sins against the Ten Commandments. I well remember considering the rule for *utor*, etc, to describe a set of pirates who took an ablative that did not belong to them, when respectable verbs used the accusative.

The results of such work gave us a command over the inflections of Latin, such as, I think, none of my pupils now possess; and the high valuation put by our teachers upon grammatical work, with its perpetual rule-giving, sifting and sorting among forms, and classification of principles, gave us, I think, a very interesting logical training.

Another part of the Latin work in the Saturnian age of which I speak consisted in abundant written translation from Latin to English. The text-books we used supplied us with a great deal of translation in their notes. The making of good Latin into good English was an end emphasized by teacher and text-book. The study of Latin was a chapter, as George Carpenter calls it, in the study of English. We translated our Cicero and Vergil into English, or tried to. We did not leave them in the Limbo

of Fools, "wandering between two worlds, one dead the other powerless to be born".

The defects of our work were many. With all our translation work, the Latin vocabulary was not well learned. We thought too much of the English meanings of Latin words. Latin composition was much neglected, and we had no translation at sight. We may say also that the contents, historical and ethical, of the Latin works we read were not only neglected (as usual) by the pupils, but scarcely alluded to by our teachers, and ignored by the text-books. I doubt if any of my class in high school to-day knows any quotation from Caesar, except that "all Gaul is divided in three parts" (in English), or from Cicero, except "quo usque tandem", or from Vergil, except the first line of the Aeneid.

Whether this neglect was to be deplored or not is, in my mind, a question. I have no question that school boys and girls profit most by the intellectual drill involved in the Latin grammar, more than at their age they can do by the ethical or esthetic study of Latin literature.

Let me get to the other end of my period, and consider the real Latin of the present day. Both as a teacher and as an examiner, I see encouraging advances. I see a great deal of contemporary work of a high grade. In the first place, there is undoubtedly a great advance among Latin students in power over Latin, as evidenced by their exercises in sight translation. We did nothing of this in the old-time school, and could have done very little. It is true that the sight translation passages of the present day school boy are not above criticism. I think his real command of Latin is masked by two weaknesses. He does not know his forms so accurately and with such refinement as we did. This is true of his Latin, and also true of his English. His bad spelling and bad grammar make his translations look much worse than they are. His English is bad; but his Latin is better than of old. Secondly, I see a similar advance in Latin composition, again masked by this same carelessness in spelling. But if these proper deductions be made, it seems to me that one may justly say that in real understanding of new Latin without help, and even in writing Latin freely without help, the work of our best scholars is superior to the work of heads of classes in the last decades of the last century, though much remains to do.

But the loss in formal Latin grammar is, of course, a serious matter. Our pupils need inflections, and we want more time in the early years to learn them. The English excel us by giving several more years to the work. Again, the loss in present day English translation work is a serious matter, which is brought about in part by the want of time

given to Latin in the modern curriculum. This is one of the many signs of the times, that the school curriculum in general contains too many subjects for best work in any one subject. The loss in English, in the Latin class, is brought about, in part, by the very increase in scientific treatment of Latin, as is evidenced in our text-books. Too many subjects are treated in the notes, obscuring and concealing the translation work which ought to be clearly before the mind of the pupil. I confess I think that a simple translation is often a better comment, to the mind of a half-grown boy, than a learned note either on syntax or antiquities.

Therefore, I should suggest that we re-consider the quantitative requisitions which we make in Latin, if there is to be any ideal Latin in place of the real. There are signs of crowding in the performance of present-day pupils. When a boy is overworked he generally does not show it by breaking down, he shows it by working in a lukewarm, half-hearted style. He "quits". I am afraid that in the real Latin of the present day, there is a less lively interest than of old for this reason. The present-day pupil has many other lessons; our class had Latin first and last, as the chief, often the only lesson in which we were interested. To restore interest in present-day Latin, we must either fall back on some elective system, which will free our classes from a compulsory competition and overwork, or we must devote ourselves to the study of plain Latin, as a modest member of the full curriculum. Something must be done soon. We need relief from pressure, to improve the real Latin of to-day, if we are to equal the English school training, where Latin is pursued so long and industriously and alone.

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